



Town of Darien

Health Department

David Knauf, MPH, MS, REHS
Director of Health
(203) 656-7320
dknauf@darienct.gov
www.darienct.gov/health
www.twitter.com/darienhealth

October, 2020

Quarterly Report to the Board of Selectmen

Since March, COVID-19 response has redefined the role of the Health Department by adding new responsibilities to our mission of protecting the public's health. Over the past several months, this office has been involved with decisions and guidance which ultimately led to the closure of schools, businesses, restaurants, cosmetology salons, public pools, recreational facilities while life, as we knew it, changed. Our office has become a focal point for community questions regarding COVID response and providing guidance to facilities as they have dealt with closure, employee illness, quarantine and reopening at a time when there was, and still is, little knowledge as to how to best address challenges posed by the virus. We have assumed guidance roles for activities over which we have had no previous regulatory authority such as office procedures, summer camps, gyms, sports activities, public gatherings, and general employee safety. We have provided advice to the Chamber of Commerce regarding safe business practices, sidewalk sales planning, proposed drive-ins, and outdoor dining. Other non-regulated activities we have been involved with include physical fitness programs, religious gatherings, choral groups, entertainment venues, graduation ceremonies and more. We have begun providing fall flu clinics by appointment only, participated and reviewed in the development of school reopening plans, and are preparing for regional COVID vaccination clinics when vaccine becomes available.

I would like to commend the Health Department staff for their dedication and commitment during this time. Everyone has been adaptable in responding to each and every new challenge this crisis has presented. Special notice is given to Mindy Chambrelli who has met State DPH requirements and has been approved to serve as Acting Director of Health in my absence.

COVID-19 Response

- As of September 30, the State reported 263 positive Covid-19 cases for Darien residents, up from the 207 cases reported for June 30. Daily updates are made available to the public at <http://www.darienct.gov/covid19> and weekly summary charts may be viewed at the same location. It is significant to note the age groups testing positive is different (younger) now than it was in the spring and recent cases have been frequently linked to sports activities and parties.
- As previously reported, the nurses follow up and attempt to interview and provide guidance to each positive case and obtain information about potential "close contacts". To be effective, contact tracing must be done within 24 hours after a positive case is reported, which means this has become a 7 day a week responsibility. Grant funding is available to enable adding staff to perform contact tracing and we have applied for that funding.

- Drive through test clinic: Darien was one of the first communities to offer a drive through COVID-19 test site in Connecticut. Since moving to its current location at the Leroy West Parking Lot, Murphy Medical Associates of Greenwich has administered almost 600 tests (with only 5 positive results) which is critical in understanding the scope of infection in the community. This has been a great service to the community and we are exploring ways to ensure the continuation of the clinic through the winter. Testing is by appointment only and can be scheduled through www.coronatesct.com.
- Since April, the State has provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on a weekly basis for local health departments to distribute to community healthcare providers. So far, we provided our local doctors and dentists with:

Date	Gowns	Gloves	Face Shields	KN95 Masks	Surgical Masks	Hand Sanitize	Thermometer
April - June	1580	14,840	1048	1752	15,380	331	56
July - Sept	2003	16,400	379	5055	8950	28	16
TOTALS	3583	31,240	1427	6807	24,330	359	72

We have retained a stockpile of PPE, currently in storage:

Gowns / Coveralls	Gloves (S, M, L & XL)	Face Shields	KN95 Masks	Surgical Masks	N95 (foldable) Masks
1,376	7,900	108	1,800	8,000	280

- We are in daily communication with the school system Director of School Nursing as we provide assistance and guidance in assessing appropriate response to potential exposures and quarantine/isolation issues.
- As the situation continues to evolve, we receive many questions from all facets of the public asking for assistance in providing a safe environment for themselves, their families, employees, customers, students, and many others. Guidance and operating rules continually change and staying current with updates coming from a multitude of sources remains a daunting task.

Other Activities

- **Flu Prevention Program:** This year, flu vaccine is being provided by appointment only through the online schedule on our website. Four dates have been announced for this modified “clinic” approach offered in the gymnasium to enable social distancing. At this time, most available times have been filled and we will likely distribute our entire allotment of vaccine before November 1st.
- **Environmental Health:** In early spring when local infection rates were very high, we suspended our field service/inspection activities to minimize staff exposure to potential illness while maintaining regular contact with all facilities to monitor employee health and food handling practices remotely. We have since resumed full inspections of all permitted facilities (restaurants and cosmetology salons), adding a layer of inspection responsibilities by enforcing State issued requirements for safe operating practices during the Phase 2 and now Phase 3 reopening. Permitted facilities we are responsible for inspecting and providing COVID reopening guidance to include 110 food service facilities (not including schools or itinerant vendors) and 36 cosmetology salons. All

environmental health inspection programs and activities, which includes properties served by septic systems and/or private wells, are provided by 1.4 FTEs, Mindy Chambrelli, REHS and Steve Brueski, Sanitary Inspector. We have recently added another part-time Sanitarian, Lori Romick who brings considerable professional experience to the Department to assist in the extra complexities associated with ensuring COVID compliance in our regulated facilities.

a. Food Protection Program:

1. Inspection Activities:

July to September 30, 2020

➤ Inspections: **117**, with 8 failures (7% failure rate)

- Ratings Summary (only Class 3 & 4 year round facilities):

A: 44

B: 34

C: 11

2. Storm Isaias had a major impact on the community and many food service facilities were without power for several days leading to considerable loss of revenue (approximately \$530,000) and food product discarded (\$495,000). Our office maintained surveillance over affected facilities to ensure any potentially hazardous food was discarded if refrigeration facilities were not functioning.

b. Cosmetology Salons: All facilities are subject to permit renewals as of October 1. Standard inspections are underway for normal operational health and safety processes, in addition to ensuring COVID-safe practices are being observed.

c. Beaches: water testing has concluded for the season. Over the past summer (2020), there were NO beach closures in Darien due to elevated bacteria counts. However, there were two days of swimming restrictions at town beaches due to rainfall events over one inch.

d. West Nile Virus & EEE: Once again, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Once collected and tested mosquitos for West Nile Virus and EEE in Darien. While West Nile Virus was found in mosquitos, EEE was not and no cases of illness were reported in Darien residents.

e. Drought: Due to below average precipitation, Aquarion has announced that lower Fairfield County has entered a Stage 2 Drought Advisory status meaning Darien residents are urged to reduce water consumption by 20% and follow the mandatory twice-weekly irrigation schedule. Unless we receive significant amounts of rain soon, it is likely we will enter a more restrictive water conservation phase.

f. Shellfish Permits: 17 recreational shellfish permits were issued this quarter. Of these, five were for non-residents.

g. Ticks: Residents can now submit ticks directly to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) for testing. This quarter, 14 ticks were submitted, only one was a deer tick and it was negative for Lyme Disease.

h. Bats: Seven specimens were submitted for rabies testing - all were negative.

Respectfully Submitted by:
David Knauf, Director of Health